

Hi everyone.

Before you read any further, I want to let you know that if you live in a state that requires some form of teaching certification to homeschool your children, PLEASE continue to follow the laws of your state, since you can get in serious trouble for not following them.

Now, this article is for those who are wondering why some states require teaching certification. I mean, on the surface it seems to make sense that the teacher better have some sort of license that signals to society that she is qualified to teach.

But if you really think about it, teacher certification just doesn't fit into the homeschool environment.

Let's start out with what a teaching certification is.

A teaching certification can come in many forms; a college degree, a GED stating that you earned enough credits to have graduated from high school, a state administered teaching certification test, all of these allow you to teach in a public school.

But these all have one thing in common. In order to earn them, you have to: 1) prepare and 2) take a test or a series of tests and 3) achieve a successful score on those tests.

Now, I don't know about you, but this process leaves me rubbing my chin, not convinced this is the best way to identify those most qualified to teach.

Why?

Because almost anyone who has the motivation and desire to pass a test will end up passing. And while passing those tests speaks volumes in dedication and commitment to one task, it doesn't prove (or disprove) that the person who just passed the tests is better qualified to teach, compared to say, the mother of the student who has no such certification.

Yes it's true - the person who just passed whatever test conferring teacher certification will know a boatload of facts about teaching the subject that she has chosen. But a test just measures how much a person knows at that point in time.

People do forget.

For example, I'm embarrassed to say that, as an economics major, I can't give you a brief definition and purpose of an IS curve (although I do recall it may have something to do with its sister, the LS curve). But as a teacher, does that make me less qualified to teach economics? At this point in time it would, especially if I am slated to teach IS curves and LS curves right this second.

But as a responsible teacher, I can always prepare prior to giving my lessons. I can go to my local library and research a couple of books on these obscure topics. Or I can search on the Internet to find out all I want (and care) to know about IS/LS curves (did you know that in .15 seconds I got over 85 MILLION references for the search "IS curves" alone? - I guess it's not as obscure as I thought.)

This kind of preparation will put me in a position to teach IS/LS curves to my students.

Nowadays, homeschool teachers have many available curriculum packages to choose from – all the things one needs to know to teach the lesson are already in the teaching material, which means you don't have to be an expert in these subjects in order for you to teach them.

So, since there's no law against researching lesson topics prior to teaching lessons...why do some states require teaching certification?

I have an explanation.

You see, a teaching certification was something that originated in the state public education system. And the quickest and easiest way to assess whether a person would be qualified to teach in that state was to measure her level of dedication and commitment of earning a teaching certification. Unfortunately, this was the most that the states could do to determine whether someone was qualified to teach.

Now somewhere in this whole process of determining how to tell if a person is qualified to teach, something BIG was left out, a factor larger than just wanting to earn a teaching certification. That missing factor is the teacher's motivation for teaching.

Well, maybe this crucial factor was identified in the design stage of the teacher certification process, but couldn't be measured easily (how do you measure a teacher's motivation levels to teach EACH one of her students?), and so was removed.

To me, it doesn't matter how much a teacher knows (remember they can always refresh their memories by going back to looking at their teaching materials), but if she doesn't have the motivation to teach a student, then that student simply won't realize her maximum potential. Of course, the student will also have to do some heavy-lifting to fulfill her end of the bargain, but if the teacher just doesn't have that "fire-in-the-belly" mentality to teach...the magic just won't happen.

Now, somewhere along the line, the folks at the top got the assumptions around public school education mixed up with those of homeschooling – they thought that both worked along similar operating models. And so, teaching certification, a public school concept, was adopted for homeschoolers in certain states.

"All this, because of a mix-up?" You ask. That's right. It happens many times – new rules are prescribed by state governments for their education system and without consideration for homeschooling, laws are passed, which then leaves homeschoolers scrambling to somehow address the issues. This reactive process has been the hallmark of homeschooling interests.

And some of it is our own fault.

Homeschoolers don't want any mention of homeschooling in laws because then, it tempts policy makers to define what homeschooling is, which then leaves open the door for even more regulations.

Why Some States Require Teaching Certification for Homeschool (6/19/09)

Whether that's the right approach for the homeschooling community is definitely another article, so I won't get into it here, but just realize that lawmakers frequently omit clauses for treatment of homeschoolers and leaves us vulnerable to things like requiring teaching certifications in some states.

Now, let's look at the homeschooling model for a second.

The homeschool teachers are usually the parents of the students, who have nothing but endless oodles of motivation to ensure that their children are learning what their parents want to teach them – otherwise, the parents wouldn't be homeschooling their children in the first place.

So from the very start, homeschooling families are set up to deliver a most rewarding educational experience. Once the motivation is established, the magic happens.

And like I said earlier, there's no test to measure motivation – but do you really need one in situations in which the parents are teaching their kids? Probably not.

And if we look at student academic performance, there is proof that parents without certification can do better than certified teachers - see my article, [What is Homeschooling](#), for the statistics.

Still not convinced?

Take a look at this [article](#) that was published in 2007 by the Home School Legal Defense Association, which is still relevant today. The article basically states that there is NO correlation between teaching certification and academic performance. Further, the article goes on to say that “parents' “hands-on” degree in homeschooling their own children is much more effective than spending all that time for a BA in education”.

To be fair, pursuing a teaching certification at least tells me that the person has commitment and dedication towards accomplishing a goal, which are traits needed to teach. But those do not even come close to the most important trait that someone needs to successfully teach. Not surprisingly, that one trait can commonly be found between the relationship of parents and their children, and there's no test that needs to tell them that.

See you next time!

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